

New distributional information on eight bird species from northern Peru

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In July and August 1994 our team of five British and Peruvian ornithologists carried out surveys during an expedition organized with the help of the University of Cambridge, in close consultation with the Asociación Peruana para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (APECO). Our principle aim was to assess the conservation status and habitat requirements of threatened and endemic birds and mammals in remaining areas of cloudforest and elfin forest on the Cordillera de Colán in Amazonas Department, northern Peru.

The Cordillera de Colán is a large, projecting mountain ridge with high rainfall. Its forest cover is a complex mosaic of habitats, some of only limited extent. Human activity has altered and degraded several of these habitats (Davies *et al.* 1994). The range is almost surrounded by the dry forest in the valleys of the río Marañón and its tributaries, which holds its own endemic avifauna.

We concentrated our fieldwork at altitudes of 1500–2650 m at two sites in the southern part of the range, with some observations down to 550 m (Fig. 1, Table 1). Amongst our records were extensions of the known distribution of eight bird species. One of them, the Royal Sunangel *Heliangelus regalis*, is the subject of a previously published paper (Seddon *et al.* 1996).

WHITE-EYED PARAKEET *Aratinga leucophthalmus*

A widespread and fairly common species east of the Andes, recorded up to 500 m asl (Hilty & Brown 1986). We found it to be common at site 2, in flocks of up to 47, recording it daily from 17 to 30 August at 700–1950 m in both cloudforest and humid lower montane elfin forest, where it was regularly seen at the ridgetop at 1950 m.

WHITE-TIPPED SICKLEBILL *Eutoxeres aquila*

A bird of lower montane humid forest, previously known from Costa Rica to Amazonas north of río Marañón, northwest Peru (Hilty & Brown 1986). One was seen on 29 July at 2300 m in very humid lower montane cloudforest at site 1; we then netted and photographed four at 1950 m in ridgetop elfin forest at site 2 on 20–23 August. The Cordillera de Colán is a new site for this hummingbird and the first south of the deep gap formed by the Marañón valley which was previously presumed to restrict the range of this species (J. Fjeldså *in litt.*).

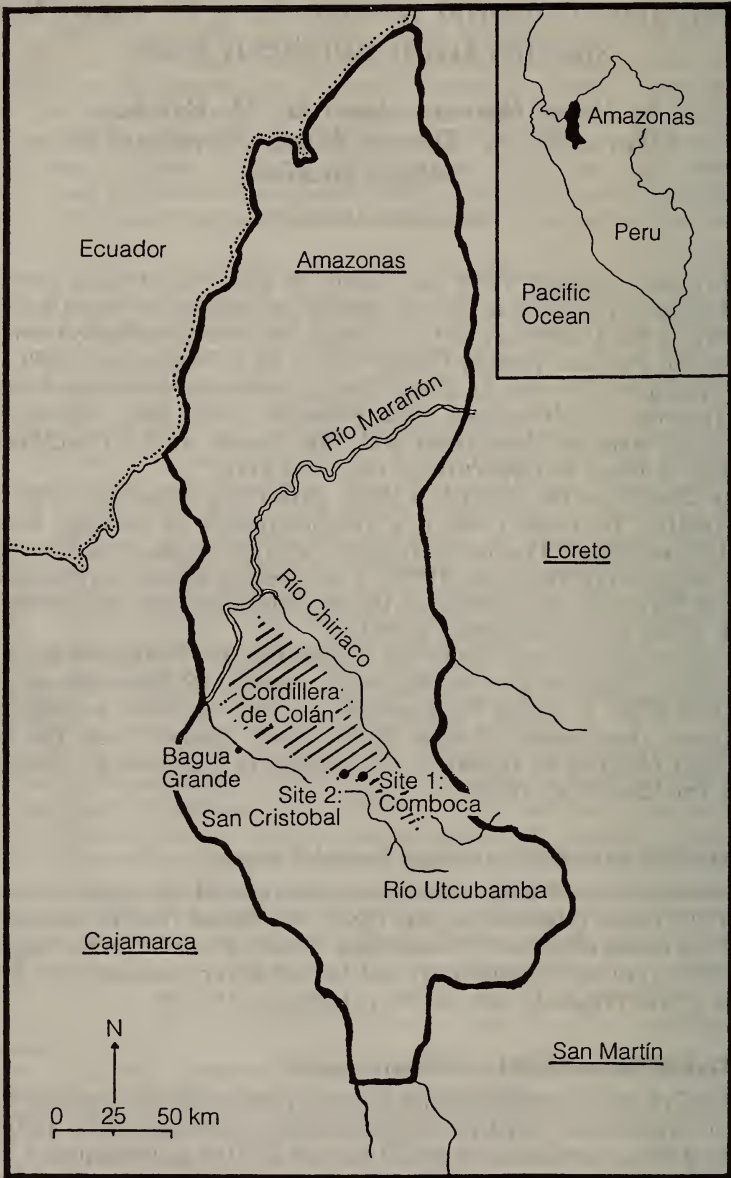


Figure 1. The location of our study sites on the Cordillera de Colán, northern Peru.

TABLE 1
Site characteristics and fieldwork effort

Site	Fieldwork dates	Altitudes surveyed (m)	Habitat	Field-hours		Mistnet-hours	
				day	night	day	night
1	13–15 Jul	550–1500	Humid premontane forest	Casual obs.			
	15–22 Jul	1500–2150	Humid lower montane forest	219	15	129	
	22 Jul–6 Aug	2150–2650	Very humid lower montane forest	286	8	319	155
2	12–16 Aug	900–1100	Dry premontane forest	Casual obs.			
	15–31 Aug	1650–1850	Humid lower montane cloud forest	149	3		
	15–31 Aug	1650–1750+ 1850–1950	Humid lower montane elfin forest	97	14	334	54

RUSSET-MANTLED SOFTTAIL *Thripophaga berlepschi*

A very local species confined to the Andes of north Peru (Amazonas on Cordillera de Colán south to east Libertad) at 2450–3350 m (Ridgely & Tudor 1994). It is considered to be “near-threatened” (Collar *et al.* 1994). Restricted-range in EBA B25: North-east Peruvian cordilleras (Stattersfield *et al.* 1995).

We had six records at 1800–1950 m, on 15–28 August, at site 2, all in ridgetop elfin forest except for one in adjacent humid lower montane cloudforest. The birds were most often seen foraging in the canopy with mixed-species flocks including Grey-mantled Wren *Odontorchilus branickii*. These records constitute a downward altitudinal range extension of 650 m for the species.

BARRED ANTTHRUSH *Chamaeza mollissima*

Rare and local in the Andes of Colombia, Ecuador and northern Peru (Cerro Chinguela in Piura), also the Andes of southern Peru (Cuzco and Puno) and western Bolivia. Mostly at 1800 to 3000 m asl. Ridgely & Tudor (1994) suggested that it may occur in the intervening section of the Andes of Peru. We recorded nine at 2300–2600 m in very humid upper montane forest at site 1, 24 July to 2 August, and one was netted and photographed at 2300 m on 26 July.

These records occur between the two disjunct areas previously known for this “superb, rare antthrush” (Ridgely & Tudor 1994). The birds most closely resembled the northern nominate race *mollissima*, showing a barred rather than streaked throat, and narrow bars on the belly rather than coarse wavy barring. However the breast was not as clearly barred as on *mollissima*, and the markings suggested the chevroned breast pattern of the southern *yungae* (Ridgely & Tudor 1994). The Cordillera

de Colán is much closer to the known range of *mollissima* than that of *yingae*, so the resemblance to the northern form is not surprising; but our records suggest plumage intermediacy in the intervening parts of this species' range, and that the río Marañón does not form a clean break between the two subspecies as might have been expected.

CHESTNUT ANTPITTA *Grallaria blakei*

A "near-threatened" species (Collar *et al.* 1994), with a restricted range in EBA B25: Northeast Peruvian cordilleras (Stattersfield *et al.* 1995). Ridgely & Tudor (1994) describe it as local on the eastern slope of the Andes in northern and central Peru in Amazonas, Huanuco and Pasco; 2150–2475 m. We recorded it once, on 16 July 1994 at 1700 m in humid lower montane forest at site 1. This small antpitta showed a black bill, greyish legs and uniform chestnut plumage with only the faintest hint of barring on the lower belly and no discernible eye ring. The bird was flushed from dense undergrowth, perched at 1 m and called once: a brief *weeoo*. No other antpitta exhibits this combination of field characters.

This record represents a 450 m downward extension of this species' known altitudinal range. Although recorded only once during the project it was familiar to local people and said to be occasionally seen on forest tracks.

RUSTY-TINGED ANTPITTA *Grallaria przewalskii*

This antpitta has a restricted range in EBA B25: North-east Peruvian cordilleras (Stattersfield *et al.* 1995). It has been recorded at 2200–2750 m (Ridgely & Tudor 1994).

This species was recorded 261 times, mainly aurally, at site 1 at 1700–2650 m on 16 July to 9 August 1994; it was uncommon in humid lower montane cloudforest below 2150 m, but more common in very humid lower montane cloudforest above this altitude. These records constitute a 500 m downward extension of the altitudinal range of this still poorly known species.

BLACK-CHESTED FRUITEATER *Pipreola lubomirskii*

This species is local on the east slope of the Andes from southern Colombia to northern Peru (west of the río Marañón in Cajamarca); 1500–2300 m (Ridgely & Tudor 1994). It is considered to be "near-threatened" by Collar *et al.* (1994). We had a total of six records, all in humid lower montane forest. It was rare at site 1, with two sightings on 16 July at 1750 m, possibly of the same individual. It was uncommon at site 2: two birds were netted in elfin forest at 1900 m (a female on 21 August and a male on 22 August), and two were seen, one in cloudforest at 1800 m on 29 August and one in elfin forest at 1900 m on 26 August. A photograph of the male was published in *Cotinga* 2: 40.

Our records clearly fit this species, with the males showing a distinctive solid black bib, the females a solid green bib, and both sexes lacking the pale tertial tips of the much commoner Green-and-black Fruiteater *P. riefferii*. The description precludes the closely related

Masked Fruiteater *P. pulchra*, in which the male has an orange lower throat and upper breast, and the female is entirely green streaked yellow below. Previously, *pulchra* was thought to replace *lubomirskii* south and east of the río Marañón in Amazonas department southwards (Snow 1982, Ridgely & Tudor 1994), which would include the Cordillera de Colán. No *pulchra* were recorded on the mountain range.

These records show that the río Marañón does not clearly separate the ranges of *lubomirskii* and *pulchra* and suggest the possibility that they may be sympatric. Further fieldwork is obviously needed at other sites in Amazonas department.

RED-BILLED TYRANNULET *Zimmerius cinereicapillus*

This species has a restricted range in EBA B29: East Andean foothills (Stattersfield *et al.* 1995). It occurs locally on the eastern slope of the Andes in eastern Ecuador (known definitely only from western Napo) and eastern Peru (Huanuco to eastern Cuzco and Madre de Dios); 750–1200 m. It was thought to possibly also occur in the intervening part of the Andes of Peru by Ridgely & Tudor (1994).

It is not easy to identify, and was recorded with certainty only once: at site 2 at 1800 m in ridgetop elfin forest, on 30 August. The following field characters were noted: a mainly yellow and olive bird with the contrasting remiges typical of *Zimmerius* tyrannulets. The rounded head showed a soft grey cap blending to olive on the nape. An indistinct pale supercilium, broken pale eye ring, pale iris and dark eye stripe leading to olive-grey ear coverts gave an overall plain facial appearance ruling out Golden-faced Tyrannulet *Z. chrysops*. The short bill was blackish above but dark pink below, paler at the base. The upperparts were uniform olive green from mantle to tail, and the rectrices darker with pale fringing. All the remiges appeared dark olive with strong yellow fringes. The dirty-white throat and faintly streaked upper breast blended into the buffy yellow belly and under tail coverts. The bird called often, either a single *seep* or a trill with a distinct *sip sip* ending.

This is the first sighting within the range suggested as likely by Ridgely & Tudor (1994). It also constitutes an upward altitudinal range extension of 600 m, though this may not be significant as the bird was with a small flock crossing through ridgetop elfin forest between valleys. The bird's occurrence in such low canopy made identification easier, and the species may have been overlooked elsewhere on the Cordillera.

BLACK-CHESTED MOUNTAIN TANAGER *Buthraupis eximia*

This is an uncommon and local species ranging from the Andes of southwestern Venezuela to extreme northern Peru (Cerro Chinguela on Piura-Cajamarca border), mostly at 2800–3500 m (Ridgely & Tudor 1994). It inhabits elfin forest, low mossy old forest, humid shrubbery and *Polylepis* forest (Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990). Two were seen at site 1 on 2 August and one on 3 August, at 2500 m in very humid lower montane forest. The combination of blue crown and nape, green back and wings and black upper breast distinguishes it from the other mountain tanagers with mostly yellow underparts. Our records are the first south of the Marañón Valley for this rather inconspicuous species (Hilty & Brown 1986).

Conclusions

Our records of White-tipped Sicklebill, Black-chested Fruiteater and Black-chested Mountain Tanager, showing new range extensions across the Marañón gap, tend to corroborate Fjeldsá's contention that this barrier is not as biogeographically significant as previously assumed (Fjeldsá 1994). There are at least nine other species with restricted ranges which are found north and south of the valley (Davies *et al.* 1994).

Our new altitudinal records probably result from several factors, including the atypical habitat spread. The areas of elfin forest at unusually low altitude "may be explained by a cool local climate owing to frequent rainfall" (Collar *et al.* 1994). Thus local conditions possibly lead to some vegetational zones occurring at lower altitudes than usual, in turn perhaps explaining the records of Russet-mantled Softtail, Chestnut Antpitta and Rusty-tinged Antpitta at unusually low altitudes.

The fascinating Cordillera de Colán is a biogeographically very complex mountain range, which supports taxa representative of six different EBAs (Davies *et al.* 1994). This vulnerable site remains in need of further study and, more importantly, needs urgent, effective protection.

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